

pages. Further, Cleaver's insights about which manuscripts are extant, and what factors influence their production, circulation, and collection, are of interest for the history of libraries and readership.

Hille, R. Thomas. *The New Public Library: Design Innovation for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2019. ISBN: 978-113-832-673-6. Softcover: £56.99.

Reviewed by Maxi Schreiber, Independent Scholar, Berlin, Germany

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Analyzing public library design in North America and Europe can seem like an endless undertaking. Yet, when confronted with such a variety of potential libraries, the author has to choose. Seattle-based architect and scholar of public architecture and design R. Thomas Hille took on this enormous task and selected ninety-one buildings for a study with this visually striking and valuable publication.

Hille explores the evolution of the public library as a building type. He structures his comparative study into two parts: "Precedents," in which he introduces milestones and influential buildings, and "Projects." In the latter, more comprehensive part, Hille presents the state of the art and trends in library design from roughly the last thirty years. The majority of Hille's design studies come from North America, with some from Northern Europe. As Hille explains in the introduction and the acknowledgments, he drew from his experience as architect and from teaching to develop the criteria that form the foundation for the analysis of the public libraries in this book. Moreover, Hille has been involved in planning and design processes and consultations for four libraries. Thanks to his professional training, he presents each building, many of which he studied themselves on site, with several photographs and ground plans.

In the introduction and remarks at the beginning of each chapter, Hille provides an overview of innovations in library architecture since Antiquity, such as stalls, alcoves, stacks to open shelving, accessibility and flexibility. Further, he explains different forms of stylistic expression, such as Beaux Arts and postmodernism. These explanations assist the lay reader, who may not be familiar with these aspects. Part 2, however, focuses on North American libraries as we know them, operated by cities and municipalities and funded through library bonds and taxes. Hille compares central libraries as well as

urban and suburban branches. Interesting in their own way are the buildings that demonstrate additions, modernizations, or cooperations with other institutions. Moreover, Hille introduces seven themes that serve as foundational criteria for this comparative design study: library identity, community use, library activities, access to library materials, flexibility and adaptability, quality of library environment, and the integration of technology.

In contrast to other comparative works on the history of library architecture, such as James Campbell's *The Library. A World History* (2013), or Kenneth Breisch's *American Libraries 1730–1950* (2017), Hille focuses more on the design of a given building and limits discussion of the historical context of the public library. The book has therefore more of an encyclopedic character, with a strong focus on visual evidence and descriptions of the functionality and spaces for each case study. Moreover, Hille's design study does not work with primary sources, such as library or city archives. Instead, he relies on his own observations and experiences visiting many public libraries that he collected over the years. Library historians and architectural historians will find part 2 useful, where Hille presents libraries that haven't been featured in other recent comparative library design histories also written by architects, such as *Bibliotheksbauten*, edited by Gigon, Guyer, Grämiger et al. (2018).

Hille's prose style is clear and easy to follow. The value of this book lies in its extensive photographs and especially the author's drawings. Hille provides the reader with detailed ground plans of every building, in many cases of up to three levels. Many examples come with additional cross-sections. No other comparative history has provided such comprehensive material and permitted such intense study of library design. If Hille's data allow for it, ground plans show also the location (and shape) of furniture, shelves and desks. The book also provides short biographies of the architects or firm.

The New Public Library is not just a selection of signature buildings. Lesser-known examples such as the Vancouver Community Library (WA), or the new Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Neighborhood Library (DC), which is the predecessor of a brutalist building, enrich the readers' knowledge of library design. It therefore is a hybrid between an architectural history of the public library and a planning aid for architects. It will inspire those eager to study current trends in library design and understand how structures have developed over time. When looking at the buildings in part 2, one can see how much the floorplan of the library changed in the twentieth century. The typical division into stacks, reading room, circulation, and so on, have fallen away. Transitions between one area and another have become fluid. Accessibility,

low barriers to entry, the importance assigned to patron experience and fun defined the major trends of the last thirty years. Ground plans are in only the rarest of cases rectangular; most are organic, triangular, even amoebic. While studying these ground plans, one can make surprising observations, such as in the case of the Vancouver Community Library in Washington State, which reserves the entirety of one of its long, spacious floors exclusively for children's and teenagers' activities.

The title, which raises the expectation of a study of public libraries in general, is slightly misleading. Hille centers American and British public libraries in his comparative design study and speaks of general developments while relying almost exclusively on North American, British, and Scandinavian examples. Part 1 depends heavily on Pevsner's chapter "Libraries" in his book *History of Building Types* (1976). This results in an emphasis on architectural styles and art historical patterns that sees history as an evolution from Antiquity to the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. To develop this narrative, Hille presents libraries that are not strictly speaking public libraries in the original American understanding, but rather libraries understood as institutions nationally operated by states, or earlier nonpublic institutions such as cloisters or colleges. Hille's evolutionary approach also leads him to move away from the seven parameters that he lays out in the introduction. Throughout the whole book, he points at specific themes and aspects of public library design but doesn't discuss all seven measures for each building. That said, Hille provides the readers with more than enough visual material to study each building and form their own opinion on its design.

Ovenden, Richard. *Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-0674241206. Hardcover: \$29.95.

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In *Burning the Books*, Richard Ovenden, director of the Bodleian Libraries and Fellow of Balliol College at Oxford, offers an engaging and sweeping history of libraries, archives, censorship, erasure, preservation, and knowledge destruction from around the world. His aim is "to explore a number of key episodes from history to highlight motivations for the destruction of the storehouses